STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD

#12

INTERNAL MEMO

TO: Jim Wolfson
Central Valley Regional Board

FROM: Jim Parsons
Technical Services Division

DATE: NOV 7 1980

SIGNATURE: Jil Jons for Jim Parsons

SUBJECT: Coalinga and Atlas Asbestos Mines, Fresno County

We inspected the subject mine areas October 29, 1980. In addition, I have reviewed available literature on the geology of the mines area.

Background

1. The Coalinga mine is located in Section 27, T19S, R13E, MDB&M within the watershed of Pine Canyon, a tributary of Los Gatos Creek. (See attached map.) The mine was operated from about 1965 to 1976 by Johns Mansville, Inc. Two major mine areas were located on Bureau of Land Management lands. The mill was located on lands leased from the Southern Pacific Land Company. The operation was regulated by Regional Board Resolution No. 70-33 that required the company to not pollute surface or groundwaters or cause nuisance conditions.

2. The Atlas mine located in Section 32, T18S, R13E, MDB&M is within the watershed of White Creek. (See attached map.) The mine was operated by Wheeler Industries from about 1965 to June 1980. This firm is now bankrupt and title will revert to Vinnell Mining and Minerals Company. Work at this mine was regulated by terms of Regional Board Resolution No. 70-32 with terms similar to above.

3. Both mines exploited serpentine deposits having unusually high concentrations of short fiber asbestos. The serpentine is relatively easy to excavate and truck to a nearby mill where the asbestos is removed.

4. Both mine sites include substantial dump areas. At the ore body itself, there are dumps for overburden and ore too lean to be profitably processed. Near the mill, there are large dumps consisting of serpentine material from which most but not all of the asbestos has been removed.

5. Below the confluence of White and Pine Creeks with Los Gatos Creek, there are surface flows as far down as Coalinga for much of the year. During floods, surface flow reaches the San Luis Division of the California Aqueduct. Space is provided at that point for ponding of the flow against the upstream side of the aqueduct embankment. Excessive flows enter the aqueduct at the Gale Avenue inlet structure. An estimated 35,000 acre-feet entered the aqueduct during 1978. In addition to the flood flows, substantial quantities of silt also enter the aqueduct and remain there to this day.

6. Recent analyses of California Aqueduct water have shown asbestos concentrations as high as 20×10^9 fibers per liter. According to John Gaston, Department of Health Services, Sanitary Engineering Section, September 29, 1980, memorandum, aqueduct inflows from Los Gatos Creek are the probable source of the asbestos. This material is a suspected carcinogen.

Findings and Conclusions

1. There has been erosion of asbestos-bearing serpentine since before the mines were developed. Furthermore, some erosion of asbestos takes place from areas never developed as mines.

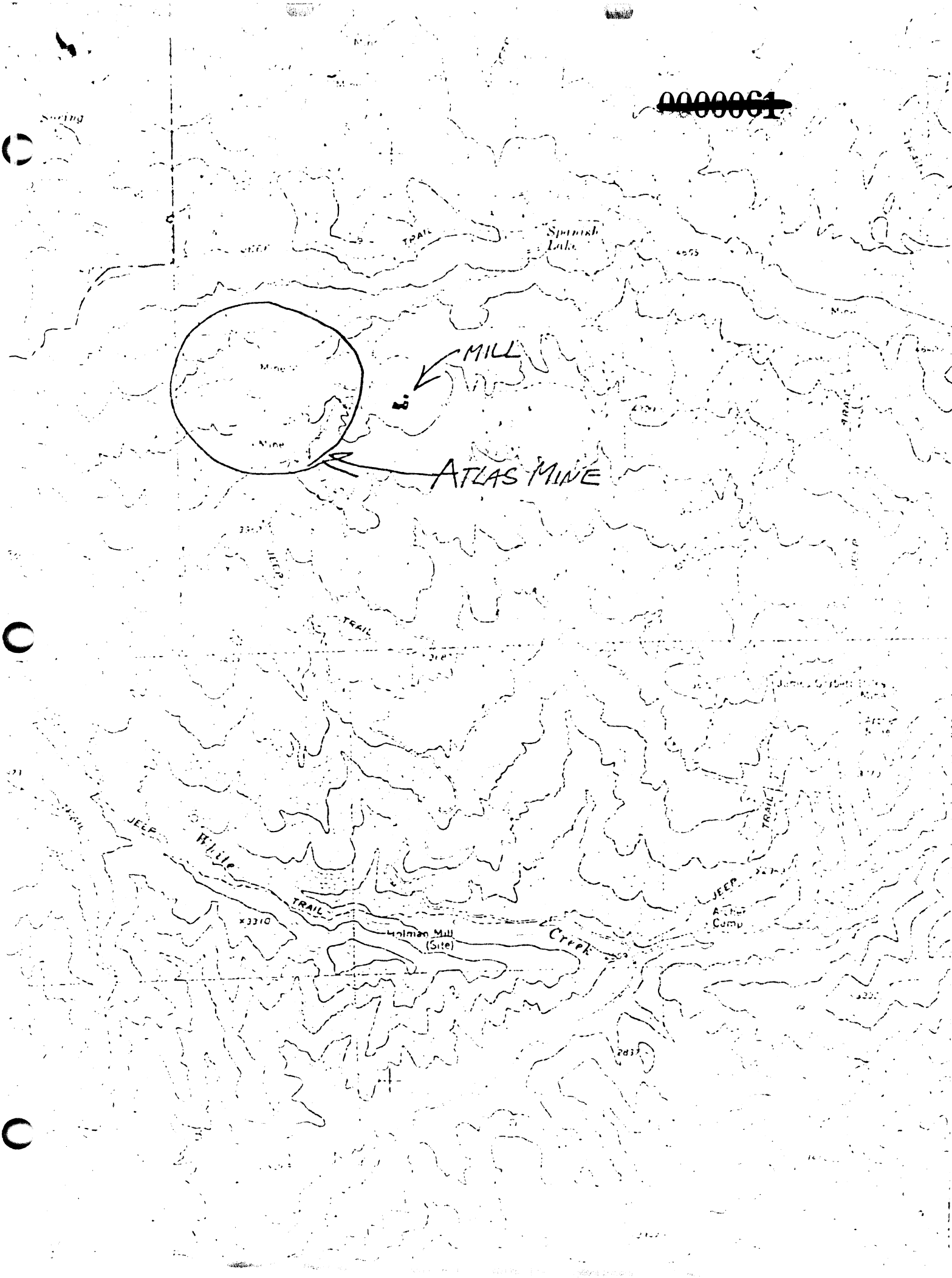
2. The several dumps described above contain substantial quantities of short-fiber asbestos. Each of the dumps and the areas of disturbed ground are subject to erosion by upgradient watersheds and rilling by precipitation directly on the site.

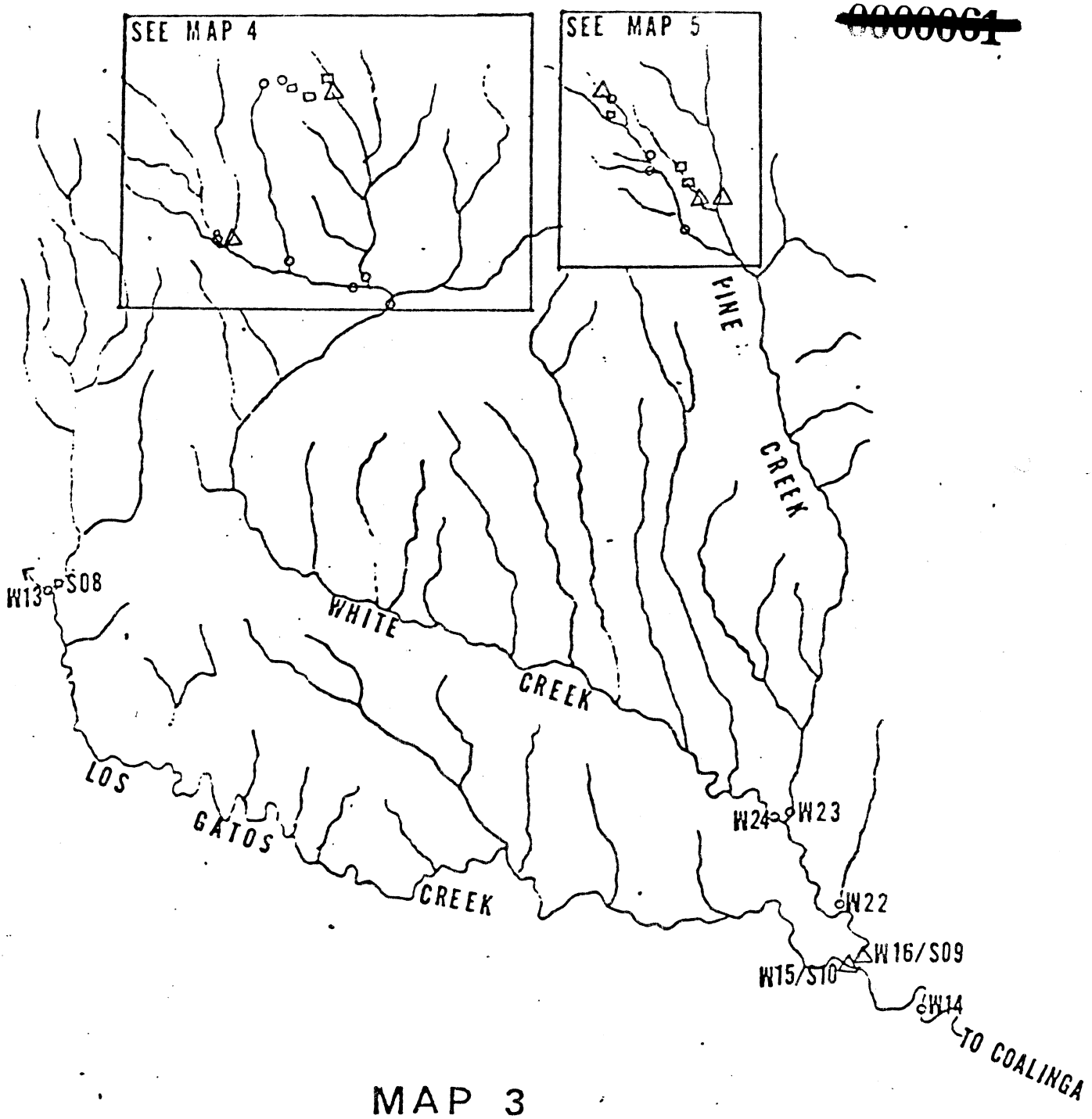
3. Unless appropriate mitigative measures are taken, erosion of the dumps and disturbed areas is likely to contribute a larger contribution of asbestos to Los Gatos Creek than erosion of the undisturbed areas. Mitigative measures could include hydromulching of the dump surfaces and other disturbed areas, construction and maintenance of settling basins, etc.

Recommendation

Require the mine owners to submit closure and maintenance plans. The plans should include an inventory of all existing dumps and areas of disturbed ground and erosion control facilities including descriptions of their current condition and necessary work to reduce erosion to "background levels".

Attachments


MILL
ATLAS MINE
Spanish Lake
TRAIL
JEEP
Holman Mill (Site)
Creek
Camp



MAP 3

GENERAL REFERENCE MAP OF THE SAMPLING SITES

○ - WATER SAMPLING SITE
□ - SEDIMENT SAMPLING SITE
△ - WATER & SEDIMENT SAMPLING SITE

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MILES